

Draft Minutes
Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees Meeting
September 23, 2022 9:00 a.m. – Lecture Hall

Members Attending:

Ron Capps, Pamela Fox, Wendy Gooditis, Emmett Hanger, Mona Kay Huffer, Steve Landes, Peter Lipsett, Monte Mason, Frank Nolen, Iris Park, Ken Plum, Ned Ruby, Chris Runion, Peggy Sheets, Bill Sibert, Scott Surovell, Emmett Toms, Paul Vames, Ken Venable, Michael Weibert

Members Absent:

Eric Bond, Kevin Callanan, Sally Hudson, Tom Lester, Robert Orrison

Guests Attending:

David Trainum, Glenda Western, Ramona Taylor, Ann Rogan

Staff Attending:

Lydia Volskis, Alexander Thymmons, Cliff Edwards, Andrew Richardson, Susan Grable, Eric Bryan, Davis Tierney, David Puckett

I. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Peggy B. Sheets

Mrs. Peggy B. Sheets called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She asked for a motion to allow Delegate Gooditis to participate virtually. Delegate Plum made the motion, seconded by Mr. Venable. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Each attendee introduced themselves to the group.

Mr. Landes made a motion that the minutes of the last meeting be approved as distributed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Toms, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Sheets described the Crossing Gallery project to the group and noted that while the buildings final name will not be “The Crossing Gallery” we will refer to it as such for the time being as that’s the name of the project in state budget paperwork.

II. AGENCY HEAD REPORT

Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reported that the agency has received multiple requests for information from the new administration on a variety of topics and that staff are busy preparing these reports. She and other staff have also attended various virtual meetings.

The agency has completed the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) audit but have not received any feedback to date.

The Museum is working to streamline how we capture information for various events and programs, to ensure consistency from year to year.

Mrs. Sheets also shared the sad news about the death of Museum employee Emily Day, in early September.

A. Finance Report

Ms. Susan Grable

Finance Director Susan Grable reviewed several slides depicting the several “buckets” of funding and revenue that support the Museum. She also discussed the Special Revenue Fund and reviewed slides of expenditures by major category and fund. Mr. Landes asked about the recent audit and Ms. Grable said that we have not received feedback yet. She noted that with the work her department is doing to meet the ARMICS standards, work through the audit, deal with ongoing IT issues and transition to the new Cardinal HCM system it can often seem overwhelming. This is especially the case for a small agency with less staff to handle not only normal daily work and reporting but he seemingly endless stream of new reports and requests from Richmond.

B. Facilities and Maintenance Report

Mr. Cliff Edwards

Mr. Cliff Edwards reported on current capital projects and maintenance reserve projects. Mr. Ruby asked Mr. Edwards to explain why we use a term contract. Mr. Edwards responded that this is like a blanket contract for a number of smaller projects so we are not required to continuously go back through the entire RFP and bidding process.

Mr. Edwards described the administration building renovation plans, the wooded amphitheater renovation plans, the planned move of the West African site (which will be rebuilt as ADA compliant). And several smaller maintenance reserve projects.

Mr. Edwards reviewed recently completed maintenance reserve projects such as upgrades to the fire alarm system on the European farms, new traffic signs along Cochran parkway, striping the main parking lot, and new interpretive signs on the exhibit site.

He said that upcoming projects include chinking the 1820’s barn, new siding on 1850’s sheds, regrading and water mitigation on the English Farm, and of course the larger projects, the Mill and the Crossing Gallery.

Other completed projects include new signage in partnership with Augusta Woods on the new sign at the entrance to their driveway on Cochran Parkway and with the American Frontier Culture Foundation on the large sign in the traffic circle just off of Route 250 near the Museum’s entrance.

Mrs. Sheets said that this will be the first renovation of the administration building on over thirty years.

B. Marketing Report

Dr. Alexander Thymmons

Mrs. Sheets told the Board that interpreter Alex Tillen had created a Tik Tok video of how to split a log by hand with an ax and fro; the video has garnered more that 1 million views!

Marketing Director Alex Thymmons said that the purpose of marketing is to help the Museum promote and achieve its vision. He said that we want to become the best managed and overall best Museum in the Commonwealth. He reviewed slides showing current and recent visitation and analysis of visitor trends, of our marketing plans for the foreseeable future, our work on social media, our new website. The Museum was named the Best Museum for Families in 2022 by _____.

He noted that as a result of his recent data analytics, he has realized that weekdays “matter” in terms of growing our visitation, and that we should not just concentrate on weekends of big events in promoting the Museum’s offerings.

Senator Nolen suggested that we not offer too much virtual content so that guests will want to come to the Museum in person!

C. Exhibits and Programs Report

1. Education

Mr. Andrew Richardson

Director of Education Andrew Richardson reviewed education group visitation for FY22, and thanked the Foundation for their support of field trip costs and transportation for schools otherwise unable to afford a trip. The Foundation also has supported virtual programming.

Mr. Richardson continued that FY22 had an increase of 137% over FY21, with 18,846 students and teachers enjoying field trips, outreach, virtual field trips and special programs. He noted that Roanoke City and Roanoke County combined for a total of over 2,000 students in our programs this year.

Senator Nolen asked if we use bilingual or deaf interpreters; Mr. Richardson said that while we have several staff who are fluent in other languages and minimal sign language, we do not have a structured system to offer language interpreters.

Mr. Richardson continued that summer camps were a great success and were 98% filled, with an excellent crew of summer camp counselors. The John Lewis Society has fifteen members who have contributed over 500 volunteer hours to date. The students work on the farms in “civvies” this year, as we transition back from the covid era.

2. Interpretation

Mr. Davis Tierney

Director of Interpretation Davis Tierney reported that all site signage, maps and materials are consistent in language and content. He said that we have hired two new wage farm assistants to help with animal care and oversight. There are two fulltime and several part-time positions open. Several interpreters have been working to create new Tik Tok videos for the Museum.

This year was the first in four years that we have been able to demonstrate dairying, and we have also partnered with JMU to grow a demonstration field of hemp. In the time period depicted hemp was an important crop used for making rope and other goods.

Mr. Nolen suggested that if we try hemp, we might also try sorghum as a demonstration crop.

Senator Surovell mentioned that he had recently visited Mt. Vernon, and said that their distillery program was excellent.

Mr. Vames asked about the activities on archaeology day, Mr. Tierney explained that children would be able to use small “dig boxes” filled with sand and “artifacts” to learn about how archaeologists work.

Mr. Tierney continued by reviewing the tentative Calendar of Events for 2023. He noted the mix of older popular events with some newer ideas.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Mrs. Sheets

A. Strategic Plan Update

Mrs. Sheets reported that the Strategic Plan is still a work in progress, noting that some things may need to be updated, as the original version does not include the Crossing Gallery. She said that the plan will be ready in the Spring of 2023.

Break

V. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Sheets

A. Report from the Foundation

Mr. David Trainum

American Frontier Culture Foundation President David Trainum thanked all who attended the August event in the pavilion celebrating George and Lee Cochran. He reported that:

- Dices has been sold to a church and the funds will be used as a match for fundraising for the Crossing Gallery.
- Next Tuesday evening there will be a beer-making demonstration on the English Farm with light appetizers, followed by a lecture on the history of beer-making in the colonies. This is the first in what will be a series of donor recognition events.
- The Foundation will sell beer at Oktoberfest as a fundraiser.
- The Foundations fundraising golf tournament is set for October 28th in Harrisonburg.
- The Annual Fund will begin in November.

B. Deaccessioning Collections items

Mr. David Puckett

Curator of Collections David Puckett reported that in anticipation of the new building with new storage, as well as the commotion which will result from the construction and move of the collections, he has prepared a list of items for deaccessioning from the collection. Under the Museum's Collection policy, approved by the Board in 2020, this must be approved by the Board. The deaccessioning list has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Executive Committee. Most of the objects on the list have been lost, no longer fit the Museum's collecting needs or mission or duplicate other items in the collection. Some objects may be sold at public auction, and two collections are being transferred to the Augusta County Historical Society.

After several questions, Mrs. Sheets asked for a motion to approve deaccessioning the listed items. Delegate Runion made the motion, it was seconded by Mr. Lipsett, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Ratification Items

Mrs. Sheets

1. Deaccessioning items

(See above)

2. Electronic meeting participation

The Museum's representative from the Office of the Attorney General, Ms. Ramona Taylor, described the updated electronic meeting participation policy which is new under FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) law. The policy among other things allows up to 2 virtual meetings of a Board per year; she also described the difference between an all-virtual meeting and one in which several members participate electronically. Mrs. Sheets asked for a motion for the Board to accept the new policy. Mr. Toms made the motion, it was seconded by Ms. Park, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Miscellaneous

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reported that the upcoming retreat with Board and staff will be facilitated by the JMU Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue.

D. Public Comment

Mrs. Sheets

There was no public comment

VI. CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)

Mrs. Sheets

At 11:15 a.m. Mr. Venable said:

I move that the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia enter closed session for:

- 1. Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community, pursuant to the exemption in Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(5), and related to the potential sale or lease of real property conveyed by the Museum to the American Frontier Culture Foundation.*
- 2. Personnel Matters*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Ruby, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. All staff left the room at 11:15 a.m.

At 11:35 a.m. Mr. Lipsett said:

I move that the Board enter open session.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Landes, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Venable said:

Whereas, the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia convened in closed meeting on September 23, 2022 pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act;

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3712, that the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge:

*(1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law, and
(2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened
were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Toms, there was no discussion and each Member verbally affirmed that no other matters had been discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting date of the Board of Trustees is set for Friday April 28, 2023

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Sheets

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.